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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR RICE'S INTRODUCTORY MEETING WITH  
ZIMBABWE PR CHIDYAUSIKU

¶1. (SBU) During a March 5 introductory meeting, Zimbabwe PermRep Chidyausiku told Ambassador Rice Zimbabwe wants to engage with the U.S. He noted the dramatic decline in health, education, infrastructure and quality of life in Zimbabwe and asked for the U.S. to lift its sanctions. Chidyausiku expressed appreciation for the U.S. and international humanitarian assistance and asked for the U.S. to have a little faith in Zimbabwe.

¶2. (SBU) Ambassador Rice replied that the U.S. has great faith in the Zimbabwean people, but needs tangible political results for the U.S. to increase its confidence in the Zimbabwean government. She said Zimbabwe would have to show a true commitment to powersharing and democracy in order to overcome U.S. skepticism. She said Zimbabwe should: appoint a legitimate Attorney General who supported rule of law; appoint a credible central banker; release political prisoners; enact true security sector reform; and enact a sustainable economic and land reform plan.

¶3. (SBU) Chidyausiku said he thought that President Mugabe would likely retire following the ZANU-PF party conference scheduled for the end of the year, and that a new party leader may emerge from that meeting. He said Mugabe, now 85, was ready to retire in 2000, but the animosity between Zimbabwe and the UK at that time motivated him to continue. Mugabe was now a hero, Chidyausiku said, because of the ongoing attacks on him by the international community. Chidyausiku also stressed new elections would be held within 18 to 24 months, after the required new constitution is ratified, which he believed would be a positive end to the transition government. Ambassador Rice kept the door open to engagement, but reiterated the new government needed to show credible improvement for the U.S. to change its current policies.  
Rice